NOTES.

The time of mental processes in the insane has been measured by Buccola, Tschisch and others, and recently again in Bechterew's laboratory by Marie Walitzkaja (*Wjestnik psichiatrii i nevropatologii*, 1888, VI). This lady worked upon seven insane subjects (3 general paralytics, 3 maniacs in various states of remission, one of which passed on into the excited stage while the experiments were in progress, and 1 paranoiac in a stage of remission), and for comparison, on five persons of sound mind, taking in all about 18,000 records. For the sane the figures are about normal; those for the insane show differences. In simply reacting to sound, the general paralytics alone were slow; most required more than 0.3 sec. and some nearly 0.5 against 0.168–0.207 sec. for the normal. In reacting to one of two sounds all the insane were slower, the slowest being those in general paralysis and in maniacal exaltation, those in remission approaching the normal. In reacting with one hand to one sound and with the other hand to the other, the delay was yet more marked; the normal time was 0.351–0.406 sec., that for those in general paralysis 0.707–0.943 sec., and that of a subject in maniacal exaltation 1.085. The association time was slower than normal for the general paralytics and for one of the others (one with a melancholic tendency), but quicker for the maniacal condition, 0.194–0.322 sec. against 0.664–0.716 for the normal.

Dr. Chas. A. Oliver some time since examined the eyes of twenty young adult male imbeciles (*Transactions Amer. Ophthal. Soc.* 1887) with a view to establishing what the normal eye should be when not used for near and careful work. He found them sound and as healthy in appearance as those of babies; and therefore concludes that such things as "insufficiency of the interni, dirty-red gray appearance of the optic disk, irregularity of physiological excavation, non-visibility of the superior and inferior portions of the scleral ring, absorbing conuses in all their varieties, increase in density and thickness of the retinal fibers, opacities of vascular lymph-sheaths, disturbed states of the choroid, and gross errors in astigmatism with changes in indices of refraction,"—things frequently found in used eyes, are the result of use and abuse.

Dr. C. Pelman, the director of the provincial institution for the insane at Grafenberg, near Düsseldorf, takes up, in a recent brochure (*Nervösität und Erziehung*, Bonn, 1888, 41 pp. 8vo), the question of educational hygiene. In assuming that nervousness is a distinguishing characteristic of the present generation, he offers no statistical proof, but appeals to the universal conviction. He understands by "nervousness," "conditions of a diseased excitability of the nervous system, which may also be well designated by the expression 'irritable weakness.'" Under the influence of a series of injuries, the nervous system loses its primitive power and sta-

bility. As a consequence, external impressions, which in a normal state would not be felt, or would be felt only in a moderate degree, excite abnormally great sensations which stand in no correct relations with the outer impressions. The draft thus made on the nervous resources is followed by greater weakness, and this weakness is nervousness. This form of weakness is the concomitant of increasing culture. Travellers agree in asserting that primitive peoples are seldom thus afflicted. While the American negroes were in the condition of slavery they were seldom nervous, but now mental diseases are common among them. America, according to Dr. Pelman, is "the promised land of nervousness." This is not, however, because of the superiority of American culture, but on account of the recklessness in the use and economy of nervous force which prevails there. It was in America that the worst forms of nervousness first appeared, especially neurasthenia. The cause of nervousness is found by our author in over-tension brought about by many particular circumstances, which may in general be summed up in "fast living," the prominent feature of city life, even in its accepted virtuous phases, and which may in turn be defined as continuous excitation without repose. The first and principal symptom in which nervousness expresses itself is the want of that power of resistance which every sound man is able to exercise against external encroachments. Constancy and firmness of character are lost. The man becomes too feeble to react against his environment, and becomes its slave. In extreme cases this loss of character extends to self-destruction, through inability to cope with the actual conditions of life. Less desperate cases seek the restoration of consciously lost power in the use of alcohol, opium and other drugs. Where restraining motives operate to preserve one from these, ideal equivalents are often sought. "To take in the hand a romance of Walter Scott's," says Dr. Pelman, "would be as tedious as comical. That is all so home-bred, so healthy, and if the end of the story is that they catch each other, wherefore so many pages and circumstances! How differently the modern romance-writers apprehend life! There one can see how it actually is, and a pistol-shot is a different solution from an ordinary marriage." After a brief discussion of heredity, in which he shows how nervousness leads to drunkenness, and the drunkenness of parents to the nervousness of children, the author touches the subject of education. "On education," he says, "devolves the double duty to make good the loss which birth has caused," or, in a word, to undo the evil of heredity. The author finds it impossible, as a physician, to approve of the modern education, yet he realizes the danger of merely one-sided criticism of a system which is, in its essence, so important to public welfare. He ventures to assert that "the child works *too early*, works *too much*, and works *badly*, that is, under unfavorable hygienic conditions." These criticisms are directed against the present requirements in Prussia, which are undoubtedly more severe than those in the United States, but would certainly apply to school exactions in many parts of our own country. The author pleads for moderation and diversity in the brain-work of boys and girls. He enlarges upon the evils of nervous over-strain for women. According to Candolle, the number of girls devoted to teaching, that have entered the Swiss asylums for the insane, is enormous. In England, the proportion of women teachers in similar institutions, according to Shaftesbury, in 1882, was astonishing, being 145

women to only 38 men. The proportion in Germany, in 1879, was not quite so great, being 186 women to 131 men. There entered in the course of the year 44 men and 56 women, showing a ratio of 7:10. Dr. Pelman adds: "What we have said concerning the large share which female teachers have in nervous diseases and weaknesses is true in a still higher degree of female office-clerks, bookkeepers, saleswomen, and post and telegraph assistants, and I am firmly convinced that there are few in these classes who do not bear through life their share of nervousness." As remedies the author names no medicaments, but urges a sacred regard for sleep, exercise, fresh air, the selection of sound partners in marriage, and avoidance of exciting competition. As a whole, the treatment is more suggestive of thought upon a wide-reaching and most important phenomenon in modern life, than satisfactory as an exact and specific solution of the problems which it raises. D. J. H.

Statistics of 1985 epileptic seizures in Dr. Féré's wards in the Bicêtre Hospital (*Compt. rend., Société de Biologie*, Nov. 17, 1888) show that nearly two-thirds of them fell between 8 P. M. and 8 A. M., and were grouped especially about 9 P. M. and 3–5 A. M. On the theory that dreams are most frequent in the first and last hours of sleep, a connection of the two suggests itself, and the questions are started whether both have a common cause, and whether the dreams influence the convulsions.

Bourneville and Sollier have contributed to the question of the proportion of physical abnormalities in idiots and epileptics the statistics of an examination of the genitals of 728 persons of these classes (apparently all males) in the Bicêtre Asylum (*Progr. Méd.* 1888, No. 7). Some sort of malformation of those organs was found in 262 persons, a number much in excess of the normal proportion. With epileptics whose attacks began after the first years of life, the proportion was much less than with simple idiots, and impotence was less frequent. On the other hand, varicocele was rarely present in the non-epileptic cases. Idiots that become such in very early life show greater malformations of all sorts than those whose defect dates from puberty or later. In so far as malformation results in impotence, it reduces hereditary disease of these kinds.

Of 10 persons caught feigning among 200 examined, Dr. J. Fritsch reports (*Jahrbücher f. Psychiatrie*, VIII, 1–2) only 2 as of completely sound neuro-psychic organization. Three more came short of actual alienation, but were neuropathic and excitable; five were fairly to be called insane. Seven were under arrest for crime against property, and two more had been. Criminals of this kind are fitted for feigning by their characteristic skill in lying, exaggeration and dissimulation.

A. Marro (*Annali di Freniatria*, I, 1888) has been led by observations on 22 paralytics to regard peptonuria as a characteristic accompaniment of progressive paralysis. In doubtful cases he would risk diagnosis on that symptom. It has been before observed in the insane, attending grave disturbances of nutrition, latent suppuration, etc.

In some diseased states of the nervous system, stimulation of a member on one side is felt in the corresponding member on the other. This phenomenon, called "allochiria" by Obersteiner and observed by him in tabetics and one hysteric, has been observed as a transient symptom by Dr. A. Huber (*Münch. med. Woch.* 1888, Nos. 34 and 35), in a case of multiple sclerosis of the brain and cord.

Five cases where spinal trouble gave a sharp boundary between sensitive and anaesthesic areas have been used by Prof. Eichhorst (*Zeitschr. f. klin. Medicin*, XIV, 5–6) for the discovery of the surface distribution of the nerves from the spinal roots. He found, contrary to common assumption, that the areas are not bounded by straight lines, but by curves, of which there were among his patients two types: one which showed on each side of the body an elevation between the vertebral and scapular lines, between the scapular and mammillary lines, and on the sternum; and another which showed elevations near the vertebral column, between the scapular and mammillary lines, and near the sternum, the last, however, not being united as before with the corresponding elevation on the other side.

An interesting case of what might be called motor musical aphasia has been added to one previously observed by Prof. Kast (XIII Wandervers. der Südwestdeutschen Neurologen und Irrenärzte, *Archiv f. Psychiatrie*, Bd. XX, H. 2). The earlier case was a talented member of a country singing society, who suffered right hemiplegia and motor aphasia from a wound of suicidal intent. The new one is that of a cultivated musical amateur (solo singer and violinist), a merchant of 45 years, who showed motor aphasia with disturbances of writing after a couple of apoplectic attacks. In both cases the perceptive musical faculty was preserved, and both recognized their failures in musical execution. The second lost his instrumental as well as his vocal music, though his ability to read notes was retained, his mental image of the tune was perfect, and the rhythm of his attempts precise. His speaking, which in the year and more since the attack had received the most practice, had returned much more completely than his musical powers, his whistling and singing being better than his violin playing.

Prof. Kirn, while admitting that there are criminals by inheritance, takes position (in v. Holtzendorff and v. Jagemann's *Handbuch des Gefängnisswesen*) against theories that would thus account for crime in general; there are those in penal institutions in whom psychology and anthropology can find no abnormalities. For the degenerate that are not fully irresponsible he approves imprisonment, but in institutions where they can be treated individually.

The *Journal of Mental Science* for January, 1889, contains a letter written to a well-known member of the Brit. Medico-Psychological Assoc. by a young woman who reformed after practicing laudanum drinking to the extent of four ounces daily. The letter is interesting in giving an inside view of the origin and mental and moral effects of the habit and of its cure.

Prof. Forel gives it as his experience (XIII Wandervers. der Südwestdeutschen Neurologen und Irrenärzte, *Archiv f. Psychiatrie*, Bd. XX, H. 2) that a short and complete stop in the use of liquor, even in delirium tremens, is harmless, from 4 to 5 days being generally sufficient for dishabituation. Nourishing food is essential, and should be given by force if necessary. Of 24 cases treated since September, 1886, at the insane asylum of Burghölzli, not a promising class of patients, 10 had so far (June, 1888) remained abstinent, 5 had relapsed, 2 were doubtful, 6 of unknown residence, and 1 chronically insane. Hypnotism was an important help with very suggestible subjects, but for permanent effect had to be united with entrance into a total-abstinence society.

The following circular has been addressed to medical microscopists:

"In behalf of 'The American Association for the Study and Cure of Inebriety,' the sum of one hundred dollars is offered by Dr. L. D. Mason, vice-president of the society, for the best original essay on 'The Pathological Lesions of Chronic Alcoholism Capable of Microscopic Demonstration.' The essay is to be accompanied by carefully prepared microscopic slides, which are to demonstrate clearly and satisfactorily the pathological conditions which the essay considers. Conclusions resulting from experiments on animals will be admissible. Accurate drawings or micro-photographs of the slides are desired. The essay, microscopic slides, drawings or micro-photographs are to be marked with a private motto or legend and sent to the chairman of the committee on or before October 1, 1890. The object of the essay will be to demonstrate: *First*, Are there pathological lesions due to chronic alcoholism? *Secondly*, Are these lesions peculiar or not to chronic alcoholism? The microscopic specimens should be accompanied by an authentic alcoholic history, and other complications, as syphilis, should be excluded. The successful author will be promptly notified of his success, and asked to read and demonstrate his essay personally or by proxy, at a regular or special meeting of the Medical Microscopical Society of Brooklyn. The essay will then be published in the ensuing number of *The Journal of Inebriety* (T. D. Crothers, Hartford, Conn.), as the prize essay, and then returned to the author for further publication or such use as he may desire. The following gentlemen have consented to act as a committee: Chairman, W. H. Bates, M. D., F. R. M. S. Lond., Eng. (President Med. Microscopical Soc., Brooklyn), 175 Remsen street, Brooklyn, N. Y.; John E. Weeks, M. D., 43 West 18th street, New York; Richmond Lennox, M. D., 164 Montague street, Brooklyn, N. Y.